7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

OMENS AND SUPERSTITIONS

ST. PAUL'S TONGUE

It was a popular belief among our ancestors that the teeth of fish, which we find embedded in some of the rocks, are St. Paul's *tongue*, which during his sermons penetrated even the solid rock. These fossils were pounded and the powder was held to possess a miraculous power in healing wounds. 825 133 [278]

Till recently it has been known that some of our countryfolks used to carry one of these teeth about with them, sometimes mounted on silver and hung about their necks, as an amulet against the bites of venomous vipers—at one time very abundant in Malta. 825 751

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6
Gozo

may also be combined with a tricky piece of rock-climbing—how tricky the writer can testify from personal experience—by anyone prepared to scale the precipitous islet known as the Fungus Rock, which closes the entrance to the lagoon of Qala Dwejra.

This impressive and now almost inaccessible rock takes its name from the strange and repellent-looking black plant (*Fucus coccineus melitensis*) which grows on its summit and in the days of the Order was regarded as a sovereign remedy against hæmorrhage and dysentery. The plant was a perquisite of the Grand Masters, and a guard was provided in a tower on the mainland to keep away trespassers. Those who came legitimately to take the fungus landed by means of a basket suspended on ropes stretched between the rock and the nearest point on the mainland; an old water-colour in the Malta Museum depicts this means of transit, which has long since disappeared. It was evidently of a somewhat precarious nature, at all events to judge from the account of a gentleman who effected the passage in 1815:[1]

> One object of curiosity on the south side of the island [*sc.* Gozo] is a rock, on which grows a kind of fungus, which is used as a styptic. The passage to this rock is rather curious, if not dangerous; two ropes are made fast on each shore, on which a box with grooves on its edges passes over. A Maltese first works his way across, then the person desirous to go over draws the box back and seats himself in it, when he is hauled over by the guide; in this manner as many as please can go, one at a time.
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> It is not a very pleasant sensation to be suspended some hundred feet above the water, and if there is any wind, the movement of the box is anything but agreeable, and all that can be obtained are a few pieces of fungus. I was well pleased to be back again, and made a determination never to risk my precious carcase in that conveyance again. It seems very strange to be swinging up in the air between two rocks, with sea-gulls and other aquatics flying about below you.

[1] From *Malta Sixty Years Ago*, by Claudius Shaw (London, 1875).